

St. Mary's Hemel Hempstead

Lunchtime Concert

Tuesday 10th January 2012

It was a delight to welcome back Anna Le Hair to our lunchtime concert series. She is a virtuoso with a consummate mastery of the keyboard but we have come, arguably, to take her technical brilliance for granted. What we can never take for granted, however, is her artistry. Anna is no specialist – her repertoire is astonishingly wide – but one knows that the minute she begins to play any piece she enters into an immediate rapport with the composer, so that, for example, we do not hear Anna Le Hair play Chopin – we hear Chopin playing (and composing) with an adoring George Sand worshipping at his feet. And this absorption in her art never flags, as she moves from one composer to another and one mood to another. The result is we have a musician whose playing we could listen to for hours.

Her performance on the present occasion bore this observation out. There was quiet meditation in Faure's Nocturne no. 6 and Kenneth Leighton's Sonatina no. 2; simple charm in Kabalevsky's 'Children's Pieces; virility and dynamism in Chopin's Ballade no. 3; and sheer fireworks in Prokofiev's Prelude no. 7. Anna ended her recital with a lusty rendering of two movements from Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' (original piano version). She will be performing the full suite at a charity concert in June when a 'visual aid' inspired by the music will be provided in the background of pictures by the artist Philip Worth – so in a way the wheel has come full circle!

Footnote: In introducing the piece by Kenneth Leighton Anna paid tribute to the composer who was her professor in Edinburgh, and from whom she derived great inspiration in her studies.